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SUBJECT: OSCE/PERMANENT COUNCIL: RESPONSE TO THE REPORT
BY THE OSCE HIGH COMMISSIONER ON NATIONAL MINORITIES, KNUT
VOLLEBAEK

1. Post is authorized to make the following statement at
the June 18, 2009, meeting of the OSCE Permanent Council in
Vienna:

Begin Text:

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.

The United States warmly welcomes Ambassador Vollebaek back
to the Permanent Council and thanks him for his thorough and
thoughtful report.

Mr. Ambassador, we share your concern about the problem of
increasing segregation along ethnic lines in education. We
support your efforts to operationalize OSCE commitments in
this field, including through your assistance to Ukrainian
and Russian authorities on the educational situation of their
minority populations and to Macedonia to address ethnic
segregation in primary and secondary education. Your efforts
to enhance regional cooperation in Central Asia on key issues
of common interest to the States) primarily related to
education) are also laudable.

We fully agree with you on the importance of representative
democracy, including the participation of individuals from
the different ethnic, racial, or religious groups that form
the fabric of the society in the governance of their country.
In the United States, the strength of our democracy is rooted
in majority rule, with strong protection for the voting
rights of individuals, without discrimination on the basis of
race, color, or membership in a language minority group. The
U.S. Government has invested a great deal in outreach to
minorities, and has made an effort to include them in the
consultation and decision-making process wherever possible.
We view this as critical to increasing understanding and
integration of minorities in society and ultimately, to
preventing conflict.

We strongly support your activities in Georgia, where your
efforts to call attention to the rights and needs of ethnic
minorities and internally displaced persons are particularly
important. Your September 2008 trip to Georgia, including
Abkhazia, and your office's participation in the joint
HCNM/ODIHR assessment mission a month later, were valuable
contributions to efforts to protect vulnerable communities
there.

In your November 2008 joint report with ODIHR on human rights
in the war-affected areas of Georgia, you rightly indicated
that serious human rights and humanitarian concerns remain.
We reiterate our call for the immediate implementation of the
report's recommendations, and once more urge a follow-up
assessment to ascertain the current human rights conditions
in the South Ossetia and Abkhazia regions of Georgia.

We hope you and your office will expand your work throughout
Georgia, including in South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in order to
foster peace and stability and to ensure human rights are
respected.

We commend your essential work to advance human rights and improve interethnic relations throughout the OSCE area and wish you every success in your work for the upcoming year.

Thank you, Madam Chairwoman.
CLINTON